York 2040 Committee

Historic Resources

January 6, 2020

York County
VIRGINIA

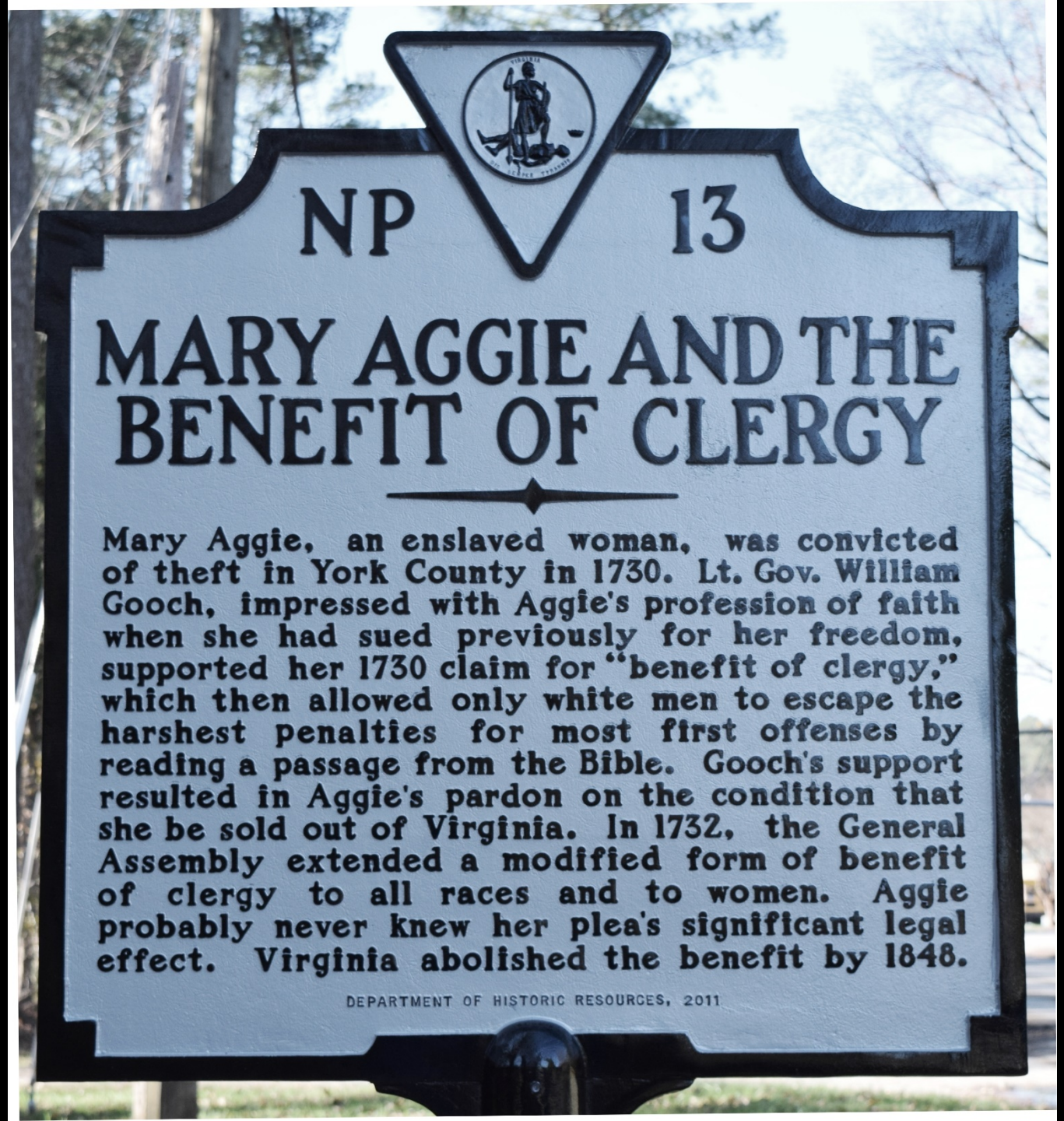
Existing Element Summary

- County History
- Existing Resources
  - Architectural & Archaeological Resources
  - VA Landmark Register & National Register of Historic Places
  - Museums
  - Historic Trails
  - Historical highway markers and interpretive signage

- **GOAL:** Identify, preserve, protect, and enhance the County's existing and future historical resources.

- Objectives & Strategies
  - Maintain/update inventories
  - Public education and awareness
  - Promote heritage tourism
  - Recognition of African American history
  - Participate in commemoration programs

Yorktown
Victory
Center


NP 13
MARY AGGIE AND THE BENEFIT OF CLERGY
Mary Aggie, an enslaved woman, was convicted of theft in York County in 1730. Lt. Gov. William Gooch, impressed with Aggie's profession of faith when she had sued previously for her freedom, supported her 1730 claim for "benefit of clergy," which then allowed only white men to escape the harshest penalties for most first offenses by reading a passage from the Bible. Gooch's support resulted in Aggie's pardon on the condition that she be sold out of Virginia. In 1732, the General Assembly extended a modified form of benefit of clergy to all races and to women. Aggie probably never knew her plea's significant legal effect. Virginia abolished the benefit by 1848.
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES, 2011

Routes of Washington and Rochambeau in 1781

From NPS "American Revolution at a Glance" unigrid

www.thevoicesoffreedo
SACRIFICE
Recording
The Voices of Freedom
from Americans in Wartime
HONOR
AMERICANS IN
WARTIME
MUSEUM
WATCH
YOUR
STEP!
"IT WAS MY GREAT ADVENTURE"
SHARE YOUR STORY TODAY!

YORK COUNTY, VIRGINIA
WORLD WAR I VETERANS

WILLIE LEE BANKS
U.S. ARMY; 811th PIONEER INFANTRY REGIMENT
80th DIVISION

JOSEPH CONNAUGHTON
U.S. MARINE CORPS; 6th MACHINE GUN BATTALION
2nd INFANTRY DIVISION

TYLER CROCKETT
U.S. ARMY; CO. B, 317th INFANTRY REGIMENT
80th DIVISION

LUTHER IRONMONGER
U.S. ARMY; CO. I, 54th INFANTRY REGIMENT
6th DIVISION

TAYLOR IRONMONGER
U.S. ARMY; MILITARY POLICE
5th INFANTRY DIVISION

BENNY LEVORSEN
U.S. MARINE CORPS; CO. C, 6th MACHINE GUN BATTALION
2nd INFANTRY DIVISION

EDWARD MARVIN LINDSEY
U.S. ARMY; CO. G, 318th INFANTRY REGIMENT
80th DIVISION

GRADY MONTGOMERY
U.S. ARMY; CO. I, 126th INFANTRY REGIMENT
32nd DIVISION

IRVING MELVIN OPHEIM
U.S. MARINE CORPS; CO. G, 5th INFANTRY REGIMENT
2nd DIVISION

LINWOOD PARKER
U.S. ARMY; CO. C, 305th ENGINEER REGIMENT
80th DIVISION

FLOYD DIEGO WHITE
U.S. ARMY; 101st MACHINE GUN BATTALION
26th DIVISION

IMAGES COURTESY OF
TIMOTHY L. SMITH, YORKTOWN, VA

The Civil War
in Tidewater Virginia

2019 Events

February ~ March

Gloucester County
Hampton
Hanover County
Isle of Wight County
James City County
Newport News
Poquoson
Richmond
Smithfield
West Point
Williamsburg
York County

For more information:
Tidewater Civil War Events Partnership
www.tidewaterhistory.com

1918-2018

BELLS OF PEACE

A World War I Remembrance
U.S. WWI Centennial Commission

2018

Yorktown Christmas Celebration

JOIN US

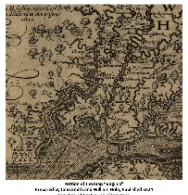
For a Celebration of Our Shared Colonial Traditions

YORK COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM
YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

HISTORY OF THE NAVAL WEAPONS STATION LAND IN YORK COUNTY

Image of a Chickahominy village
Illustration by artist Sidney E. King, 1968
Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of Natural History, VM

Centuries before the Naval Weapons Station Yorktown (NWSY) was established in York County, the land was occupied by the Chiskiack Indians, part of the Powhatan Confederacy of the larger Algonquin nation. At the time of the first European contact in the mid-16th century, the Chiskiack occupied a village of the same name along the banks of the York River. Spanish Jesuits attempted to establish a mission near the village in the middle 1550's, but conflict between the two groups resulted in the Spanish abandonment of the mission. When John Smith and fellow English settlers arrived at Jamestown in 1607, the Chiskiack village numbered about 200 people. The location of the village (labeled "Kiskiack") is shown on John Smith's 1612 Map of Virginia. The English settlers' desire to expand into Powhatan lands beyond Jamestown created discord between the two peoples, which was followed by hostilities on both sides. The Chiskiack village was decimated by the English during a retaliatory attack following a Powatan massacre of English settlers in 1622. The remaining Chiskiack abandoned their village and relocated north to the Middle Peninsula area.



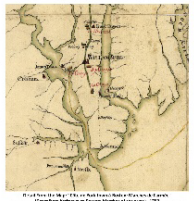
Portion of John Smith's map of
Virginia, showing Kiskiack (Chiskiack) and Werowocomoco, the village of Powhatan, the leader of the Powhatan Confederacy

Buffalo Plantation, circa 1862
Home to Colonial and Civil War soldiers
Lee's Mill in the distance, at right

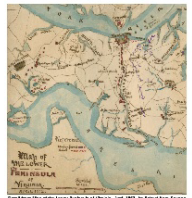
The Lee House, Yorktown, Virginia, circa 1862
U.S. Navy photograph

The new English colonial government was soon granting large tracts of land to English settlers, and NWSY land contained several plantation estates, including the 600-acre Bellfield Plantation, 350-acre Ringfield Plantation, and the Lee family property, which included several land grants totaling over 1,000 acres of land. The original 1630 Lee House (also known as "Kiskiack"), still stands on NWSY property.

NWSY land holds a long and varied military history. The ancient Williamsburg-Yorktown Road, once an Indian path, and later used as a thoroughfare between the two towns, traverses NWSY land. Traces of the original road can still be seen today. During the Revolutionary War, French and Colonial troops traversed the road on the march between Rhode Island and Yorktown, where the end of the War was determined by the Colonial victory at the Siege of Yorktown in October 1781. Only 80 years later, Confederate and Union troops marched across NWSY land during the Peninsula Campaign of the Civil War.



Detail from "Map of the Seat of War in Virginia" by Lieut. Colonel Wm. Mitchell Wells, U.S. Army
Courtesy of Yorktown on Screen, Member of Linn Group, LLC
Showing the path from Lemon's Wharf (Yorktown) to Williamsburg, along the Williamsburg Road
Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Detail from "Map of the Lower Portion of Virginia" circa 1862 by Robert Ross Duncan
Shows approximate troop locations by color and surface conditions during the Civil War
The Library of Congress

"Civil War Map of a Part of the Peninsula" by Lt. Col. Wm. Mitchell Wells, Chief Engineer, Army of the Potomac
Courtesy of NARA Official Country Maps for Regional Church Leader

Following the Civil War, a community of freed African American slaves and their descendants settled on NWSY land in what was called the "reservation" and later Charles Corner. Many of these families lived and worked in farming or oystering on lands that were once large plantations. The community established several churches in the area, such as St. John's Baptist Church (also known as Cheesecake Church) which is shown at Charles Corner on the Civil War era map of the Virginia Peninsula (left). Today, all that remains of Cheesecake Church is it's cemetery. The cemetery is the final resting place of Sergeant Major Edward Ratcliff, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his outstanding service during the Civil War. He was one of only sixteen African Americans to earn this distinction during the war.

On July 1, 1916, Congress passed a bill to finance the Naval Service, which included a provision that granted the President the power to seize land by eminent domain for the creation of a new Navy Mine Depot. On August 7, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson signed Executive Order #1472, which allowed for the eminent domain taking of land for a Navy Mine Depot near Yorktown, Virginia. The land covered by the order included Charles Corner. Landowners were given 30 days to abandon their land within the Mine Depot area, and landowner compensation was worked out following the abandonment.

"Two engine used at Yorktown Mine Depot"
Yorktown circa 1920
U.S. Navy photograph

The Mine Depot was established to provide mines to be used in the North Sea during World War I. The initial installation included storage magazines for mines and other explosives, a loading plant, power plant, barracks, mess hall, administrative buildings, and a railroad connection to the C&O Railroad. An aviation training field was also established in 1919 to provide Navy pilot training in bombing, torpedo, and gunnery operations. In 1922, the field supported the first flight made from a U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS *Langley*, which was anchored in the York River. For twenty years following World War I, the Depot received, reclaimed, stored, and issued mines, depth charges, and related materials.

Naval Mine Depot pier, Yorktown, Virginia, circa 1920
U.S. Navy photograph

Naval Weapons Station, Yorktown, Chesapeake Annex circa 1947
U.S. Navy photograph

Operations at the facility expanded with the onset of World War II, and the base became the world's largest U.S. Naval Mine Depot. Following the war, the facility's mission expanded to include storage, testing and distribution of advanced weaponry, such as guided missiles. On August 7, 1958, on the station's 40th anniversary, the facility's name was changed to Naval Weapons Station Yorktown. In 1998, the adjacent Cheatham Annex (previously the site of a World War I era DuPont munitions plant, Seabees training base, and annex for the U.S. Navy Norfolk Fleet and Industrial Supply Center) was consolidated with NWSY. To this day, the facility, which celebrated it's 100th anniversary in 2018, continues to provide support to the Navy in all aspects of fleet ordnance support and training.

Security guards at Yorktown
Yorktown, Virginia, circa 1940s
Courtesy of Yorktown on Screen, Member of Linn Group, LLC

Marine Corps Security Force Company conducts a helicopter insertion exercise at Naval Weapons Station Yorktown
U.S. Navy photograph

Sailors and Marines from Naval Security Group Activity Sabana Seca, Puerto Rico, conduct a boarding exercise on board the USS Ponce, a decommissioned amphibious transport dock, through the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea, September 2005
U.S. Navy photograph